

ILLINOIS POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD  
November 15, 2007

COMMONWEALTH EDISON COMPANY,	)	
	)	
Petitioner,	)	
	)	
v.	)	PCB 04-215
	)	(Trade Secret Appeal)
ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL	)	
PROTECTION AGENCY,	)	
	)	
Respondent.	)	

ORDER OF THE BOARD (by A.S. Moore):

On October 25, 2007, petitioner, Commonwealth Edison Company (ComEd), and respondent, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), filed a joint motion to stay this trade secret appeal until April 25, 2008. For the reasons below, the Board grants the motion. In this order, the Board provides background on the case before discussing and ruling on the joint motion.

**BACKGROUND**

On June 2, 2004, ComEd appealed an April 23, 2004 trade secret determination of IEPA under the Environmental Protection Act (Act) (415 ILCS 5 (2006)). The Board docketed the trade secret appeal as PCB 04-215 and accepted the case for hearing. In the IEPA determination being appealed, IEPA denied ComEd's claim for trade secret protection of information that ComEd submitted to IEPA. IEPA made the determination after receiving Sierra Club's request, under Illinois' Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (415 ILCS 140 (2006)), for a copy of ComEd's submittal.

ComEd maintains that the information it submitted to IEPA is entitled to trade secret status, exempt from public disclosure requirements under the Act. *See* 415 ILCS 5/7, 7.1 (2006). The information relates to six coal-fired power stations, all of which are in Illinois. The stations are formerly owned by ComEd and currently owned by Midwest Generation EME, LLC.<sup>1</sup> ComEd originally submitted the claimed business and financial information to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) in response to USEPA's information request under Section 114 of the federal Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. § 7414). Sierra Club also submitted a federal FOIA request to USEPA for the same claimed information. USEPA has been and is

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<sup>1</sup> Midwest Generation EME, LLC (Midwest) has appealed a separate IEPA trade secret determination concerning some of the same information submitted to IEPA by ComEd. That pending Midwest appeal is docketed as PCB 04-216.

currently in the process of determining whether to exempt the materials claimed to be confidential business information from release under federal FOIA.

In an April 6, 2006 order, the Board ruled on ComEd's first motion to stay this appeal based on the pending USEPA determination of confidentiality. ComEd sought to stay this proceeding before the Board until the USEPA process concluded. IEPA opposed the motion. The Board issued a short-term stay, staying this proceeding for 120 days or until August 4, 2006. On August 1, 2006, ComEd filed an agreed motion to extend the original stay through December 4, 2006. The Board granted the agreed motion in an order of August 17, 2006.

ComEd filed a motion to further extend the stay on December 19, 2006. On December 20, 2006, IEPA filed a response opposing ComEd's motion. The Board denied ComEd's motion by order of February 15, 2007.

On May 31, 2007, ComEd filed a motion for interlocutory appeal of the hearing officer's order denying motions to compel discovery. On June 14, 2007, IEPA filed a motion for an extension of time to respond to ComEd's motion and on June 22, 2007, IEPA filed its response opposing ComEd's motion. In light of today's ruling on the joint motion for stay, the Board does not address these pleadings at this time.

On August 30, 2007, the hearing officer issued a revised discovery schedule as follows:

Answers to final interrogatories and final document requests due to be served on or before September 7, 2007. Fact discovery closes on September 14, 2007. Supplementation and amendments of prior discovery responses to be served on or before September 14, 2007. Pre-hearing disclosures regarding exhibits and witnesses and stipulated facts to be served on or before October 12, 2007. Supplemental discovery closes on January 14, 2008. Dispositive motions and motions *in limine* to be filed on or before February 25, 2008. Hearing Officer Order, PCB 04-215, at 1 (Aug. 30, 2007).

On September 27, 2007, the hearing officer issued an order noting that, according to the parties, discovery is proceeding.

As stated above, on October 25, 2007, ComEd and IEPA filed a joint motion to stay this proceeding until April 25, 2008. Accompanying the joint motion is a status report from ComEd, as well as ComEd's waiver to September 20, 2008, of the Board's deadline for deciding this appeal. The Board meeting before that deadline is currently scheduled for September 18, 2008. The case has not been to hearing, but as noted above is in discovery.

The Board today, in separate orders, is likewise granting joint motions for stays in two other trade secret appeals involving claimed information that is also the subject of a confidentiality request pending before USEPA: Midwest Generation EME, LLC v. IEPA, PCB 04-185; and Midwest Generation EME, LLC v. IEPA, PCB 04-216.

## **DISCUSSION**

According to the joint motion, USEPA is evaluating whether the “very documents at issue” in ComEd’s trade secret appeal before the Board “are entitled to confidential treatment under the federal Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552.” Joint Mot. at 1. ComEd was recently advised that USEPA has submitted ComEd’s claimed information to “an independent contractor for review in connection with [USEPA’s] FOIA determination.” *Id.* at 2. Attached as an exhibit to the joint motion is a letter, dated September 11, 2007, to ComEd from Mark J. Polermo, Associate Regional Counsel with USEPA Region 5. The USEPA letter states in part:

This letter is to notify you that U.S. EPA will be disclosing Commonwealth Edison’s documents provided in response to the Section 114 [of the federal Clean Air Act] information request to its contractor, Industrial Economics, Inc., for the purpose of assisting U.S. EPA in the confidentiality determination. The contract number is EP-w06-065. *Id.*, Exh. A.

The joint motion then states: “Accordingly, the parties jointly move the Board to stay PCB 04-215 for a period of six months.” Joint Mot. at 2. According to the parties, the Board and USEPA are simultaneously engaged in proceedings involving the same “party in interest” (ComEd), the same “FOIA requestor” (Sierra Club), and a “substantially similar determination” of confidentiality with respect to the same claimed material. *Id.* ComEd and IEPA maintain that granting their requested stay would:

(1) avoid the costly and inefficient allocation of resources that is necessarily resulting from duplicative proceedings; (2) avoid practical difficulties that might arise from contrary FOIA determinations by state and federal agencies; and (3) allow the Board to be informed by a closely related federal determination. *Id.*

The parties assert that the factors supporting the Board’s prior issuance of a stay “have renewed force today.” Joint Mot. at 2. The joint motion explains that the parties are “poised to engage in expensive and time-consuming expert discovery and motion practice as the hearing in this matter approaches.” *Id.* ComEd and IEPA therefore “request that this case be stayed for six months until April 25, 2008.” *Id.*

The Board notes that Section 101.514(a) of its procedural rules addresses motions for stays:

Motions to stay a proceeding must be directed to the Board and must be accompanied by sufficient information detailing why a stay is needed, and in decision deadline proceedings, by a waiver of any decision deadline. A status report detailing the progress of the proceeding must be included in the motion. (See also Section 101.308 of this Part.) 35 Ill. Adm. Code 101.514(a).

The decision to grant or deny a motion for stay is “vested in the sound discretion of the Board.” See People v. State Oil Co., PCB 97-103 (May 15, 2003), *aff’d sub nom* State Oil Co. v. PCB, 822 N.E.2d 876 (2nd Dist. 2004). When exercising its discretion to determine whether an

arguably related matter pending elsewhere warrants staying a Board proceeding, the Board may consider the following factors: (1) comity; (2) prevention of multiplicity, vexation, and harassment; (3) likelihood of obtaining complete relief in the foreign jurisdiction; and (4) the *res judicata* effect of a foreign judgment in the local forum, *i.e.*, in the Board proceeding. *See A. E. Staley Mfg. Co. v. Swift & Co.*, 84 Ill. 2d 245, 254, 419 N.E.2d 23, 27-28 (1980); *see also Environmental Site Developers v. White & Brewer Trucking, Inc.*; *People v. White & Brewer Trucking, Inc.*, PCB 96-180, PCB 97-11 (July 10, 1997) (applying the Illinois Supreme Court's *A.E. Staley* factors). The Board may also weigh the prejudice to the nonmovant from staying the proceeding against the policy of avoiding duplicative litigation. *See Village of Mapleton v. Cathy's Tap, Inc.*, 313 Ill. App. 3d 264, 267, 729 N.E.2d 854, 857 (3rd Dist. 2000).

Both parties presently want to stay this proceeding until April 25, 2008. The Board finds that the requested stay will serve the purposes articulated by the parties, as set forth above. The Board places considerable weight on the fact that, for the first time, the Board has been presented with USEPA documentation concerning the federal agency's on-going confidentiality review process, and the fact that IEPA has joined in this motion for stay. The Board also emphasizes that the stay would last to a date-certain in the near future, and that the parties have made progress in litigating this appeal since the Board denied the contested stay extension request on February 15, 2007. In addition, the FOIA requestor, Sierra Club, has not sought to oppose the joint motion for stay, and ComEd has waived the Board's decision deadline to September 20, 2008.

Further, the parties' claims of impending discovery and motion practice costs and time commitments are substantiated by the hearing officer's order of August 30, 2007. That order set deadlines scheduled to take place before the joint motion's proposed stay termination date of April 25, 2008. Under the hearing officer order, absent a stay, supplemental discovery closes on January 14, 2008, and dispositive motions and motions in *limine* must be filed on or before February 25, 2008. *See* Hearing Officer Order, PCB 04-215, at 1 (Aug. 30, 2007).

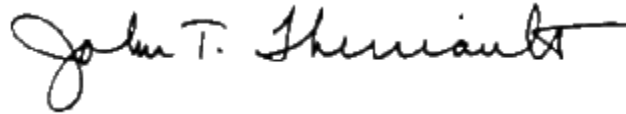
Under these circumstances, and considering all of the relevant factors, the Board finds that the requested stay extension is appropriate. Accordingly, the Board grants the joint motion, staying this appeal through April 25, 2008, unless the Board by order ends the stay sooner. The Board again stresses, however, that it is "mindful of the strong policy interest, evidenced in the Act, favoring public disclosure of environmental compliance information, particularly emission data. *See* 415 ILCS 5/7(b)-(d) (2004)." *Commonwealth Edison*, PCB 04-215 (Apr. 6, 2006). The Board therefore cautions the parties that in the future, absent especially compelling circumstances, the Board may be disinclined to extend the stay.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Board grants the joint motion of ComEd and IEPA to stay this trade secret appeal. The stay is accordingly in effect through April 25, 2008, unless the Board issues an order terminating the stay earlier. If, during the stay, USEPA issues a final confidentiality determination concerning ComEd's claimed information, ComEd must promptly file with the Board a copy of USEPA's determination. As necessary, ComEd may make the filing consistent with the procedures of 35 Ill. Adm. Code 130 for protecting information from disclosure.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

I, John T. Therriault, Assistant Clerk of the Illinois Pollution Control Board, certify that the Board adopted the above order on November 15, 2007, by a vote of 4-0.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John T. Therriault". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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John T. Therriault, Assistant Clerk  
Illinois Pollution Control Board